

October 6, 2008

Via E-mail

President B. Joseph White
Office of the President
University of Illinois
108 Henry Administration Building
506 S. Wright St., MC-370
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Dear President White:

As president of the Illinois chapter of the National Association of Scholars (NAS), I represent scholars across Illinois, including your campus. For the mission of the NAS, please see www.nas.org

Our association opposes the banning of all political expression by faculty and staff on campus. This interpretation of the State Ethics law is unconstitutional and undermines the mission of a university as a place of free expression. See stories below.

http://nas.org/polArticles.cfm?Doc_Id=357

<http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/9728.html>

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-il-universitycampaig,0,1993984.story>

As state employees, we cannot use university property for partisan purposes, but wearing a button or attending a rally is well within the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

Echoing the memos you received from FIRE and the ACLU, I ask you to reverse your decision and defend the constitutional right of your faculty and staff to express themselves without insinuating that they “represent” the university by doing so. They are representing their own positions—an element of free expression fundamental to the working of our democracy.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Bean

Jonathan Bean
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Professor of History
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